



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Egyptian Regional Human Rights Authority
Report of Findings
11-110-9005
Chester Mental Health Center
February 22, 2011

The Egyptian Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has completed its investigation concerning Chester Mental Health Center, a state-operated mental health facility located in Chester. The facility, which is the most restrictive mental health center in the state, provides services for approximately 240 male recipients. The specific allegation is as follows:

Recipients at Chester Mental Health Center are not provided adequate time to complete their meals.

Statutes

If substantiated the allegation would be a violation of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (Code) (405 ILCS 5/2-102 (a)).

Section 2-102 (a) states, "A recipient of services shall be provided with adequate and humane care and services in the least restrictive environment, pursuant to an individual services plan."

Investigation Information

To investigate the allegation, the HRA Investigation Team, consisting of two members and the HRA Coordinator (Coordinator) conducted two investigations at the facility. During the initial site visit, the Team spoke with the Chairman of the facility's Human Rights Committee (Chairman) and three recipients. During the second visit, the Team spoke with a Representative of the facility's Human Rights Committee (Representative) and five recipients. The Team also observed recipients from Unit B being served lunch in the facility's dining room. Additionally, the Authority reviewed the facility's Policy/Procedure entitled, "Operation of Patient Dining Room".

I: Interviews:

A: Chairman

During the initial visit, the Team spoke with the Chairman regarding the allegation. He stated that recipients are provided approximately thirty minutes for meals. He related that recipients with specialized diets are served prior to those with regular diets. The trays for the recipients are set up by staff as recipients enter the dining room, and recipients return their dietary tray, bowls, and cups to the dish room to be prepared for washing. However, Security Therapy Aides (STAs) collect and count the silverware and take to the dish room to be cleaned.

B: Representative:

During the second visit to the facility, the Representative related that it is not the facility's policy to rush recipients through meals and presented a similar account of the meal time procedure as the Chairman

C: Recipients

During the initial visit to the facility, the Team spoke with Recipient 1, Recipient 2 and Recipient 3. During the final visit, the Team interviewed five additional recipients (Recipient 4, Recipient 5, Recipient 6, Recipient 7, and Recipient 8).

1)...Recipient 1:

Recipient 1 stated that during an earlier period of time a significant problem existed with STAs rushing recipients to complete their meals. According to Recipient 1, considerable improvement had occurred; however, periodically, some STAs continue to hasten recipients and not allow adequate time for them to complete a meal.

2)...Recipient 2:

Recipient 2 stated that some staff members continue to hurry recipients to finish their meals; however, most provide an adequate allowance of time.

3)...Recipient 3:

According to Recipient 3, it depends on the STAs who are in the dining room at meal times. He stated that some STAs always rush recipients to complete, while others are consistently patient and encourage recipients to take time to complete their meals.

4)...Recipient 4:

Recipient 4 informed the Team that he had not experienced any problems with having an adequate time to eat meals, and he did not believe that other recipients had encountered any problems with being rushed. However, he did express dissatisfaction that the facility had decreased the number of times fried chicken, barbeque and cake is served.

5)...Recipient 5:

Recipient 5 expressed that he always had enough time allotted to complete his meals, and believed that other recipients were able to finish their meals without being rushed.

6)...Recipient 6:

According to Recipient 6, the first persons served are nearing completion of their meals when the last individuals are served. However, he had not observed those individuals who were the last to be served being hurried by staff. He stated that he had not encountered any problems in this area.

7)...Recipient 7

Recipient 7 informed the Team that he had no concerns regarding the allotted time for meals; however, he felt that his food has been and continues to be poisoned.

8)...Recipient 8:

Recipient 8 informed the Team that he did not have a problem with the time designated for meals. Nor did he have any complaints regarding the quality of the items served.

D: Observation of Noon Meal.

During the final visit to the facility, the Team observed a noon meal being served to recipients who reside on Unit B. When the Team entered the dining room, approximately 2/3 of the recipients were sitting at the table eating their meals. The remainder of the recipients individually obtained their tray from the serving area and returned to their tables. Some recipients sat alone at a table, while others sat with another individual. Four staff members were present to assist approximately 35 recipients with the meal.

The consensus of the Team, after observing for approximately fifteen minutes, was that the meal was served in an orderly, quiet fashion. Both recipients and staff appeared relaxed, calm, and absent of the need to rush throughout the entire meal. The Team noted that during the time of the observation the majority of the recipients consumed most of the food items on their individual trays.

E: Operation of Patient Dining Room (Policy)

Documentation in the Policy Statement is as follows, "In order to protect the patient with safe food, certain sanitation, security and environmental conditions must be met."

According to the Policy, trays for recipients eating in the dining room are set up by support workers as recipients enter the dining room. If a recipient is unable to come to the dining room, the recipient's meal is delivered to unit staff to serve to that recipient, prior to the other recipients coming into the dining room for their meals. Only plastic utensils are sent to the units. Flatware used by recipients is monitored by STAs. Staff count all flatware after it is washed by picking up each item so that their hands do not touch the tines of forks and the bowls of the spoons before storing the items.

The Policy mandates that all food safety be maintained by insuring that hot food is covered and cold food refrigerated or iced between servings of the individual units. The Policy directs that all equipment be sanitized. Additional mandates include the following: 1) Support workers are not allowed to eat while working on the serving line. However, drinking water or a soft drink is permissible in the break room between the serving times. 2) If the staff member drinks anything between serving times, he/she must wash their hands before serving another group. 3) Each staff member is required to wear disposable gloves.

According to the Policy, recipients are to return their dietary trays, bowls, glasses and cups to the dish room to be scraped, placed in a rack and run through the dishwasher. STA are directed to collect the silverware or plastic ware and take those items to the dish room to be counted and washed. When all of the units have been served, the support workers are directed to clean and sanitize the serving line and to wash pots and pans in the kitchen area.

Documentation in the policy indicated that the Security Supervisor assigned to the dining room must insure that all soiled table cloths are changed after each unit completes a meal. After completion of the breakfast and lunch periods, housekeeping staff members are assigned to clean tables and chairs, change table cloths, and sweep and mop the floors. After the evening meal, dietary staff members are designed to clean the tables and change the table cloths; however, housekeeping staff members' responsibilities are to clean the chairs and the floors. The dietary support workers must insure that the steam table is drained, cleaned and sanitized.

According to the Policy meal schedules must be coordinated in order that the recipients meet other required facility scheduled activities. The Policy required that recipients trays taken to the unit be delivered at the following times: Breakfast...6:45 AM to 7:10 AM; Lunch 11:30 AM to 11:45 AM, and Dinner from 4:30 PM to 4:45 PM.

The following schedule is listed for recipients who eat in the dining room:

	<u>Unit E&F</u>	<u>Unit C</u>	<u>Unit A</u>	<u>Unit B</u>
<u>Breakfast</u>	7:15 AM	7:35 AM	7:55 AM	8:15 AM
<u>Lunch</u>	12 AM	12:25 PM	12:50 PM	1:15 PM
<u>Dinner</u>	5 PM	5:35 PM	6:05 PM	6:25 PM

Additional information in the Policy indicated that recipients are encouraged to eat all meals, especially breakfast since medication may cause gastric upset in the absence of food. Food is not to be withheld as a punishment; nor are recipients forced to eat a meal against their will.

Summary

The Chairman and Representative informed the Team of the facility's dining procedure. Five of the eight recipients interviewed did not express any problems with the amount of time allotted for each meal. However, three of the recipients stated that the time allotted depended on the staff members who were supervising the meal time. One of the recipients stated that a substantial problem existed for a period of time; however, improvement had occurred. The Team's observation of a noon meal served to recipients who reside on Unit B revealed a relaxed environment, which did not appear to be "forced" due to the Team's observations. Documented meal time schedules listed in the facility's Policy allow adequate time for meals, and the Policy recognizes the importance of recipients eating scheduled meals.

Conclusion

Based on the information obtained, the allegation that recipients are not provided with adequate time to complete meals is unsubstantiated. No recommendations are issued.

Comment and Suggestion:

Even though there was considerable evidence to reach an unsubstantiated finding, some of the recipients interviewed indicated that a few staff members who monitor meals continue to have a tendency to rush recipients through their meals. Therefore, the following suggestion is issued.

Supervisors should remind staff members who are assigned to monitor recipients' meals of the time allotted for the meals and importance of having a relaxed, calm, unhurried environment while recipients are eating.